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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL MEETING IN BOSTON,

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A SERMON.

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BE YE STRONG THEREFORE, AND LET NOT YOUR
HANDS BE WEAK : FOR YOUR WORK
SHALL BE REWARDED.

THERE was such a peculiar and intimate connection between the civil and religious institutions in the Hebrew republic, that the cause of religion was necessarily and deeply affected, by both the good and bad administration of government. Hence it became a proverb in Israel, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice : but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Religion never failed to flourish under the smiles and patronage of wise and pious princes ; nor, on the other hand, did it ever fail to languish and decay under the frowns and opposition of unwise and wicked rulers. This in some measure appeared, while the whole house of Israel were happily united in one civil as well as religious community ; but it still more clearly appeared, after the revolt and apostacy of the ten tribes. In the days of Joshua, *Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of*

his increase ; but after his decease, and while there was no king in Israel, the cause of religion visibly decayed, and never revived until the days of David and Solomon. While they were in the administration of government, they made noble and successful exertions to promote the public worship of God, and diffuse a spirit of vital piety among all classes of people : But after Rehoboam the son of Solomon and Jereboam the son of Nabat divided the nation, religion received a most fatal blow. In the kingdom of Israel it was greatly corrupted ; and in the kingdom of Judah it was generally neglected. Rehoboam and Abijah were both unfriendly to the cause of God, and did much to obstruct and retard its progress. Accordingly, when Aza ascended the throne of Judah, he found religion in a low and languishing state. *Iniquity had long abounded, and the love of many had waxen cold.* But this deep declension, instead of weakening, awakened his holy zeal, to revive the sinking cause, which lay so near his pious heart. His first sincere and vigorous efforts in favor of religion, were highly pleasing to the God of Israel, who sent a Prophet on purpose to strengthen his resolution and perseverance in accomplishing the good design, which he had so nobly conceived, and so successfully pursued. This is the agreeable account, which the sacred historian gives of some of the first acts of his pious and prosperous reign. “ So Abijah slept with his fathers, and Aza his son

reigned in his stead. And he did that which was *right* and *good* in the eyes of the LORD his God. For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and broke down the images, and cut down the groves : And *commanded* Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and commandments." After he had proceeded so far, "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went down to meet Afa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Afa, and all Judah and Benjamin ; the LORD is with you, while ye be with him ; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you : but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak : For your work shall be rewarded." This seasonable message from the God of Israel, gave new life and vigor to Afa and all his pious subjects. For it is added, "And when Afa heard these words, and the prophesy of Oded the prophet, he took *courage*. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Menassah, and out of Simeon : *For they fell to him out of Israel in abundance*, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him." In this connection, the words of our text naturally suggest this animating truth to our present consideration :

THAT the friends of God have good ground for unshaken resolution in promoting the cause of religion.

To set this subject in a proper light, I shall endeavor to show,

I. THAT resolution is necessary in promoting the cause of religion.

II. THAT the friends of God have good ground to be bold and zealous in promoting such a noble and important design.

I. LET us consider the necessity of resolution in promoting the cause of religion.

RESOLUTION is the essence of that mental strength, which gives energy to all the powers and faculties of body and mind. It is composed of love, zeal and confidence, which are the most operative affections of the human heart. When a man has conceived a design, which engages his supreme affection, which engrosses his whole attention, and which he firmly believes he is capable of executing, he then feels a strong resolution to call forth all his latent powers into vigorous exercise, to accomplish the object of his wishes. Such resolution has always had a principal influence in effecting all the great things, which have ever been effected by the men of the world. Equal resolution, though of a different kind, is no less necessary in promoting the cause of religion, than in promoting any other great and difficult undertaking. Men of piety may have time, and op-

portunity, and learning, and wealth, and power, and influence, to promote the cause of truth, and yet never exert themselves in this great and good design, unless they possess a firm and unshaken resolution. But all good men, who have this noble quality, are properly prepared to espouse the cause of God, amidst a frowning world. Hence the inspired writers unitedly inculcate resolution as the principal thing necessary, in order to succeed in promoting the interests of religion. “Be ye strong therefore; and let not your hands be weak,” says the prophet to Aha and the men of Judah, who were engaged in this pious and important work. When Jehoshaphat visited his kingdom, and discovered the prevalence of vice and irreligion, he exhorted the proper reformers, to be *bold* and *zealous* in the discharge of their difficult duty. “Behold,” says he, “Amaziah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; also the Levites shall be officers before you.” But notwithstanding all this aid and protection, he adds, “*Deal courageously*, and the LORD shall be with the good.” When Shecaniah, a bold and zealous friend of God, urged Ezra the priest to espouse the sinking cause of virtue and piety, for which he had been fervently praying, he plainly intimated, that resolution was indispensably necessary to effect a religious reformation. “Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee; we also will be with thee: *Be of good courage and do it.*”

If we now turn our attention to those, whom God has employed as eminent instruments of building up his kingdom, we shall find, that a bold and persevering spirit was the most prominent trait in their character. Though Moses was a man of meekness, yet he was no less a man of firmness and resolution. He feared not the wrath of the king, nor the frowns of his court, nor the murmurs of the false and faint-hearted Israelites ; but boldly pursued the cause of God, in defiance to the united opposition of all the enemies of the church. Elijah displayed peculiar courage and zeal in appearing on the Lord's side, and espousing his cause, at a time of general, and as he thought, of universal declension. He not only opposed and confounded all the prophets of Baal ; but even dared to deliver the message of God to Ahab, whom he knew had been seeking his life. It was a firm and unshaken resolution, which enabled Nehemiah to carry on and accomplish the work of God at Jerusalem, in opposition to all the intrigues and threats of Sanballat and Tobiah, and their numerous confederates. For, being admonished to consult his personal safety, he nobly replied, " Should such a man as I flee ? " What invincible firmness did Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego discover, when they maintained the worship and glory of the only true God, before the mouth of the lions' den, and the flames of the burning fiery furnace ? A

A bold and undaunted spirit was the most striking lineament in the character of John the Baptist, who was sent as a pioneer, to prepare the way of the LORD. The meek and lowly Jesus himself was the lion of the tribe of Judah. He spake with a courage and boldness, with which never man spake. His undaunted resolution, in purging the temple, surprised even his disciples, until they recollected it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The holy apostles imbibed the bold and zealous spirit of their Divine Master, which rendered them superior to all opposition, in spreading the gospel among both Jews and Gentiles. This the enemies of truth most sensibly felt, and most explicitly acknowledged. For we are told, "When they saw the *boldness* of Peter and John,—they took knowledge of them, *that they had been with Jesus*. And when these two apostles were arrested in their work, they bid defiance to the threats of their malignant opposers, and made this solemn appeal to their consciences: "Whether it be right in the sight of GOD to hearken unto you more than unto GOD, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Paul, that chosen vessel to bear the messages of grace to those sitting in the region of the shadow of death, was a man of astonishing resolution and zeal. He dared the dangers of the sea, and the perils of the wilderness. He attacked the false religion

and vain philosophy of pagan priests and moralists. He regarded not the terror of tyrants, nor the rage and violence of persecutors ; but boldly declared the whole counsel of God. And though his friends frequently advised him to avoid the dangers and evils, to which he exposed himself in the cause of CHRIST ; yet his persevering zeal and resolution would not suffer him to desert, nor neglect the benevolent design, which he had determined, at all hazards, to pursue. Hear his bold and undaunted language. “ Behold, I go bound in spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there : Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and ministry which I have received of the LORD JESUS, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Luther was raised up to purge away the errors and delusions of the Church of Rome, and to spread the pure truths of the gospel through many of the states and kingdoms of Europe. This was a most arduous and dangerous task ; accordingly to fit him for his work, God inspired him with a bold enterprising, unconquerable spirit. This animated and supported him, amidst the greatest labors and contests, that have ever perhaps fallen to the lot of any individual, since the days of the apostles. As Calvin stood next to Luther in

propagating truth in opposition to error ; so next to that great reformer, he possessed the largest share of genuine resolution and fortitude. But though Zuinglius was a man of more penetration and knowledge, and commanded a more elegant and persuasive pen, than either Luther or Calvin ; yet, by his great timidity and irresolution, he often injured the glorious cause, which he sincerely wished to promote. Thus it appears from the experience of ages, as well as from the testimony of scripture, that a pious and persevering resolution is indispensably necessary, in order to propagate the gospel, and build up the kingdom of CHRIST in the world. I now proceed to show,

II. THAT the friends of God have good ground for such unshaken resolution, in promoting such a great and good design. The precept in the text is connected with an animating promise. “ Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak : For your work shall be rewarded.” Here I shall mention a few of the weighty motives to bold and vigorous exertions in the cause of religion.

I. THE friends of God have often been succeeded in their sincere attempts to promote his glory in the conversion of sinners. He has been pleased to allow them the privilege of being workers together with him, in strengthening and

enlarging his spiritual kingdom. This privilege they have sometimes zealously improved, when they saw religion was declining, and multitudes of sinners were perishing in their sins. At such a time, Aſa ſet himſelf to revive the ſinking cauſe of GOD. He firſt prepared the way, by removing the obſtacles which ſtood oppoſed to his pious deſign ; and then uſed the proper means to awaken the attention of his ſubjects to the things which belonged to their everlaſting peace. In this arduous work he perſiſted for years, and happily ſucceeded in attaining the object of his deſires, his prayers, and exertions. His ſon Jehoaſaphat followed his good example, and carried on the work, which his father had ſucceſſfully begun. After ſeveral wicked princes had reigned over Judah, Jehoiada the prieſt, in the minority of Joaſh, ſtrengthened the things that remained and were ready to die, and, by his vigorous exertions, brought about a great reformation in religion. You remember, that Hezekiah, Joſiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah, were firm and faithful friends of GOD ; and every attempt they made to promote his cauſe was crowned with ſignal ſucceſs. I might mention the apoſtles, Luther and Calvin, David Brainard and many other miſſionaries, who have done much to ſpread the favor of CHRIST'S name among both their own countrymen and heathens. So many inſtances of ſucceſs in ſo many ages and parts of the world, in promoting the cauſe of religion,

clearly demonstrate that the work, though attended with great and innumerable difficulties, is really practicable. And this practicability affords a solid ground of encouragement, in undertaking and pursuing the benevolent design. There is something extremely animating in the prospect of success. It always inspires the mind with irresistible zeal and fortitude in seeking a desirable object. This alluring motive, God, in his providence, holds up to the view of his friends, who are sincerely engaged to promote his cause.

2. THE promotion of religion is such a noble and laudable design, that it is even glorious to fail in the attempt. In all great and difficult undertakings, there is always more or less danger of being eventually disappointed. It is not in man to command success, even in his most lawful and benevolent pursuits. The men of the world are often frustrated in accomplishing their wisest and best concerted designs. And the friends of God have not unfrequently been disappointed in their pious efforts to spread the knowledge of truth and promote the interests of religion. Many societies formed for this benevolent purpose, have failed of answering their own and the public expectation. But in all cases, in which the failure has not been owing, either to the negligence, or the unfaithfulness, or the despondency of those employed, in concerting

and executing the design, their attempts have always met with general approbation and applause. Melvill Horne appears amiable and respectable, notwithstanding his want of success in his mission, and notwithstanding his own acknowledged timidity and irresolution. Some of the more ancient promoters of religion, by their bold, though unsuccessful attempts, endeared their names to future ages. At a time of great degeneracy in Judah, "The spirit of God came upon *Zechariah* the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper : Because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the LORD." This bold and sincere attempt to promote the reformation and salvation of sinners, though it failed of desired success, finally reflected peculiar honor upon the name of Zechariah. For, when CHRIST told the Jews, that the blood of all the prophets should be required at their hands, he mentioned in particular "the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar." CHRIST himself labored in vain and spent his strength for naught, in preaching the gospel to the Jews ; but though Israel were not gathered, yet he was glorious in the eyes of his

Father. The apostles preached the same gospel in many places, with little or no success ; but yet they were a sweet favor of CHRIST in them that perished, as well as in them that were saved. John Wickliff was unsuccessful in the same work in which Luther succeeded ; but yet his noble, though unsuccessful exertions, have rendered his name illustrious through all the protestant nations. If good men should fail of spreading the gospel to the extent of their desires and expectations ; yet their sincere and vigorous attempts shall meet the just approbation of both God and man. Some seem to be backward, to engage in this work, for fear they shall not succeed. They imagine they see a lion in the way ; but supposing there should be a lion in the way, or supposing the worst that can be supposed, that some unforeseen obstacles shall arise, which cannot be surmounted, it will be glorious to fail, after they have done all that was in their power to do. This the friends of God ought to consider as a solid foundation for fortitude and zeal, in undertaking and prosecuting such a noble and laudable design, in which they have nothing to lose, but much to gain, by their most zealous and bold attempts.

3. THOSE, who espouse the cause of religion, have reason to expect the peculiar presence and assistance of God in their pious exertions. The cause of religion is emphatically the cause of

GOD, in the promotion of which his heart is wholly engaged. The zeal of the LORD of hosts centres in the execution of his purpose of grace towards this fallen world. For the attainment of this grand object, he is constantly employing every creature, and directing every event, in the universe. While any of his friends, therefore, feel his spirit and heartily espouse his cause, he must be pleased with the motives of their conduct, and afford them all the protection and assistance which they need, in doing their part, to promote his gracious design. Accordingly we find express promises of his presence with those, who sincerely endeavor to promote his cause. He directed Azariah to tell Aha and the men of Judah in his name, "The LORD is *with you*, while ye be *with him*." He engaged to assist and protect Jeremiah, while pleading his cause, in the midst of the most formidable opposition. "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them *all* that I command thee : Be not dismayed at their faces : Lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I have made thee this day, a fenced city, and iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, *for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.*" Ezekiel tells us, that GOD gave him a similar

promise in a similar case. "And he said unto me, son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak *my words* unto them. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead ; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house." The command, which CHRIST has laid upon all his faithful ministers to spread the gospel, is enforced by a promise of his continual presence. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. *And lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.*" Such peculiar promises of divine support, protection, and assistance, apply to all those, who are heartily engaged to spread the knowledge and blessings of the gospel among the perishing children of men, and are designed to inspire them with resolution and zeal in the great undertaking. Every sincere christian, every faithful minister, every pious and zealous missionary, may adopt the language of the apostle, and say, "I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me." Whose hearts and hands, therefore, must not be strong, while they are sincerely engaged in that work, which they know is highly pleasing to CHRIST, and in the performance of which,

they have just ground to expect his promised presence and protection ? Especially when they consider,

4. THAT their benevolent desires and exertions to advance the interests of religion, shall certainly be attended with the approbation and prayers of all good men. These have universally imbibed one spirit, and heartily desire the prosperity of Zion. Here the distinction of different denominations ceases to operate, and admits an entire union in sentiment and feeling. Good men, in whatever denomination of christians they are found, unitedly seek the spread of the gospel and the prevalence of religion. And though they may differ in opinion, respecting particular measures to promote the common cause of christianity ; yet they really unite in the general object, and sincerely pray, that it may be eventually obtained. They feel the spirit of Paul, who said, "Some indeed preach CHRIST even of envy and strife ; and some also of good will. What then ? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, *CHRIST is preached* ; and I therein *do* rejoice, yea, and *will* rejoice." The friends of GOD universally wish well to, and heartily pray for those, who are sincerely engaged in spreading the gospel, and promoting the salvation of sinners. Agreeably to the direction of CHRIST, they daily offer up their desires to GOD in that compre-

hensive petition, "Thy kingdom come." And whenever they see any successfully employed in building up this kingdom, they naturally join with and assist them in the good work. We have a striking instance of this in the context. Though the ten tribes had generally revolted from the true God, yet there were some pious men among them; and these united heart and hand with Aśa the king of Judah, in promoting the cause of true religion. Accordingly it is said, "*They fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.*" The sincere and successful promoters of religion will always have the approbation and prayers, and in that way at least, the concurrence and assistance of all good men. This, indeed, makes them really strong; and strength is a peculiar source of resolution and zeal. Besides,

5. THEY are equally sure of the esteem and affection of all those, whom they shall be instrumental of converting. Though men are naturally averse from being awakened, convinced and converted; yet after they have become reconciled to God, they never fail to feel a peculiar affection for those whom they view as instrumental of their spiritual and eternal good. Paul bears testimony to the ardent affection, which some of his hearers had felt towards him, whom they had viewed as the instrument, under God, of their saving conversion. "I bear you record,

that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." How much have faithful and successful missionaries been beloved and carested, by those to whom they have carried the gospel, which turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? No men in Judah were more sincerely esteemed and venerated, than Aza, Jehoiada, Hezekiah, and Josiah, who were the happy instruments of reforming and converting sinners. If men are faithful and successful in seeking the salvation of souls, they will not only deserve, but receive the gratitude and esteem of those, whom they are the means of bringing home to God. This consideration may well support and animate them, in suffering all the reproach and opposition they may meet with, in spreading the gospel, and taking the subjects of the prince of darkness out of his hands. I must add,

6. THAT all the sincere endeavors and extraordinary exertions in favor of religion, shall finally meet a glorious recompense of reward. God has promised to reward men for the faithful improvement of all their talents. And what better use can they make of the blessings of providence, than to employ them in building up the kingdom of God? This is the most important design carrying on in this world, and even in any part of the universe; and, therefore, to be

instrumental in promoting this, is to do the greatest good, which lies in the power of man to do. No person can employ his time, his interest, his knowledge, and all the weight of his character, to a better purpose, than that of spreading the gospel, and promoting the eternal interests of his fellow men ; and there is no other way, in which he can secure a more ample reward, in the great day of retribution.

BUT beside the parable of the talents, we find particular promises to those, who make peculiar exertions to build up Zion. Such is the promise in the text. " Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak : For your work shall be rewarded." The same idea is suggested by the apostle James. " Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him ; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." The apostle Paul says to christians in general, " Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding *in the work of the LORD*, forasmuch as ye know *that your labor shall not be in vain in the LORD.*" And the prophet expressly declares, " They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." These promises of a glorious recompense in a future state, ought to animate good men at this day, as they

animated Moses, the prophets, the apostles, and even CHRIST himself, to the most bold and vigorous exertions in the cause of religion.

It now remains to improve and apply the subject, with proper freedom and plainness.

IN the first place, it is natural to conclude from what has been said, that the friends of GOD *have been very negligent* in promoting his cause in the world. When a man, merely for the want of resolution, does not perform any important work, which belongs to him to perform, and which he has time, opportunity, and abilities to perform, we never scruple to say, *that he is guilty of negligence*. It is certainly the proper business of the friends of GOD to promote his cause. He formed them vessels of mercy for his own use. He called them out of darkness into marvellous light, that they might be "the light of the world, and the salt of the earth." And he has commanded them to seek the interest of his kingdom above every other object. It is, therefore, their appropriate and important business, to promote the cause of religion. And it must be acknowledged, that they have long had time, opportunity, and ability, to perform the duty devolved upon them. But have they been faithful? Are there not many indubitable marks of their negligence? Does not the languishing state of religion, bear testimony to their timidity and indolence? Had they been bold, and zealous, and

active in the cause of God, would there have been so many of the human race, at this day, involved in Jewish, Pagan, Mahometan, and Papal darkness? Have there not been christians in Asia? Why then has Asia been so long perishing for the want of gospel light? Have there not been christians in Africa? Why then has Africa been so long perishing for the want of christian knowledge? Have there not been christians in Europe? are there not many there still? Why then is so great a part of that quarter of the world still ignorant of the pure doctrines of the gospel? Has there not long been a succession of pious men in America? Why then are there so many of the aborigines still perishing in their native barbarity and ignorance? Have we not many godly ministers in these United States? Why then are there so many declining churches, so many destitute congregations, and so many individuals abandoned to vice, irreligion, and infidelity?

THESE are plain indications of negligence in the friends of God, for years, if not for ages past. Had christians in every age possessed the spirit of the apostles and the primitive believers, what great things would they have done to promote the cause of CHRIST? Or had they been as wise as the men of the world, and as zealous to promote the salvation of others, as sinners are to promote their temporal interests, the gospel would have long since been carried to

the ends of the earth. Or, indeed, if the same zealous, bold, and undaunted spirit, which has lately fired the breasts of christians in Europe and America, had fired their breasts but a few years ago, the face of religion would have undoubtedly appeared, at this time, unspeakably different. Nothing has been wanting, since the revival of learning, the invention of printing, and the discovery of the magnet, to prevent the universal spread of the gospel, but merely christian resolution and zeal. This long and great negligence calls for the humiliation of christians in general, and especially of christian ministers and magistrates, who ought to have been the first in zeal and resolution to promote the cause of CHRIST and the spread of the gospel. The world now looks like the field of the sluggard, because christians, like the sluggard, have been crying, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." The present melancholy state of christianity throughout the world, reproaches all its friends for their past irresolution and negligence.

THE next thing to be inferred from what has been said is, that none will ever do much to forward the work of spreading the gospel, without a large share of christian zeal and resolution. Men may be pious and sincerely wish well to the benevolent design, and yet do more to defeat, than to accomplish it, if destitute of a truly missionary spirit. In order to carry into effect

such a difficult and laborious undertaking, those, who enter upon it, must be all awake and alive to the important object before them. But none will feel a proper concern for others, who do not feel a proper concern for themselves. None will be greatly engaged to promote religion abroad, who are not equally engaged to promote it at home. None have any encouragement to embark in the adventurous cause of propagating the gospel, unless their hearts glow with love to God, and a tender concern for the souls of men. They must be weaned from the world ; they must be stripped of mercenary motives ; they must be willing to deny themselves and take up the cross ; before they can possess that firm and persevering resolution, which is necessary to meet the reproach and opposition to be expected, in spreading a religion, which has never failed to awaken all the malignant passions of the human heart. They must sit down and count the cost, lest, after having put their hand to the plough, they should look back, and betray the cause, which they engaged to befriend. Why have attempts of this kind so often proved abortive ? Has it not been chiefly owing to a *worldly spirit*, which has palsied all pious resolution and zeal ? And who can expect to speed better, without a better spirit ? What will lifeless meetings, what will proper resolutions, what will verbal engagements avail, without bold, zealous, persevering exertions ? No person is properly pre-

pared to be a member, and much less to be a missionary, of this society, who has not a heart to spend and be spent in the arduous undertaking, and to meet all the evils and embarrassments, which may eventually attend it. A cold heart, a timid mind, a feeble hand, is by no means fit to be employed in a work, which calls for the warmest zeal, and the most vigorous exertions.

BUT since the friends of God have such good ground for unshaken resolution, in promoting the cause of religion, we may justly infer, in the last place, that it is not yet too late to attempt the propagation of the gospel through this extensive country. Though we have lost much time, and neglected many favorable opportunities for such an undertaking ; though an awful stupor has seized the minds of many of the professed friends of God ; though the enemies of religion have, within a very few years, greatly increased in numbers and strength ; though they have set every engine in motion, to spread error, deism, and even atheism, through every corner of our land ; though, I say, all these obstacles stare us in the face, and must be overcome, in order to propagate the gospel among those who are perishing for the want of it ; yet it may not be too late to effect the difficult and important design. Good men, as well as bad, are able to do almost any thing, which they *think* they are able to do. Difficulties vanish before resolution.

There never was so great a declension of religion in Judah, but that a reformation was always effected, when good men had only zeal and resolution enough to attempt it. If the few friends of God in this country, therefore, were only awake, united, and possessed of proper zeal and fortitude, they might, under the divine direction and influence, put a check upon the progress of vice and infidelity, and extend the limits of the Redeemer's kingdom where Satan is now reigning without control, and leading multitudes of poor, deluded creatures to eternal destruction. Christianity is a cause, which is destined to prevail ; and which is destined to prevail, by the blessing of God on human exertions.

THIS we, my Brethren, have in practice professed to believe, by uniting for the purpose of sending the gospel to those, who are perishing for the lack of vision. "Let us be strong therefore, and let not our hands be weak," for we have all the encouragement desirable, to pursue with vigor and fortitude the work, which we have seriously and deliberately undertaken. Though we and others have too long neglected it, and, by our neglect, given rise to great and formidable difficulties ; yet these mountains shall become plains, before a pious, bold, missionary spirit. It has been God's usual method, to arise and plead his own cause, at those very times, when it appeared to be on the very point

of extinction. It was when Jereboam the son of Nebat had made Israel to sin, and well nigh corrupted the whole church ; that God raised up Aza and others, to rekindle the dying, glimmering flame of religion. It was when the two tribes and half were pining away in their iniquities, and resembled the valley of dry bones, in Babylon ; that God awakened the zeal and blessed the exertions of his friends, to bring about their conversion and deliverance. It was when the man of sin had defaced and nearly destroyed the christian religion ; that God raised up a constellation of bold and zealous men, to espouse and spread his sinking cause. Hence the late extraordinary efforts in Europe and America "*to crush the wretch,*" or to use a more decent expression, *to extinguish christianity*, afford a strong ground of faith, that "the time, yea, the set time to favor Zion, is come." For it has been God's uniform conduct, *when the enemy came in like a flood upon his people, to set up a standard against him.* And we are happy to say, that God has already begun to set up his standard in various parts of the christian world ; and his friends are now rallying around it, with uncommon zeal and resolution, to defend and promote the interests of his kingdom. An unusual missionary spirit has spread through England, Scotland, Ireland, many parts of Germany, and a number of the United States. This ought to animate us, as it animated the *directors* of the missionary society in London. In one of their

communications to the society, they say, "From Germany, and a vast body of associated ministers in Lusatia, assembled from all parts of Christendom, we have received *the most fraternal good wishes* for the *accomplishment* of our designs, and their *great satisfaction* in our enterprise, which has *warmed* and *stimulated* them to fresh exertions ; while they cry day and night to God, *for our success*, from the Carpathian mountains to the snows of Norway." They add, "America, stirred up by your example, has caught the holy flame. So that the LORD JESUS, the great head of the church, seems to be awakening a similar spirit, *throughout all places* of his dominion." There is yet another promising prospect before us. In the last and present year, there has been a more extensive and extraordinary effusion of the divine influence in many parts of our land, than has been known in the course of almost sixty years. God is now visibly arising to plead his own cause ; and shall we not, *when we hear the sound of his goings, bestir ourselves* to promote the prosperity of Zion ? Under all these favorable circumstances, if *we* are not wanting in our zeal, resolution, and exertions, we have nothing to fear in the pursuit of our great and interesting object.

WHAT if our number be small ? A small number firmly united in sentiment and zeal, may do wonders in promoting the cause of CHRIST.

This has been demonstrated by those, who first carried the gospel to three quarters of the world.

WHAT if our first and feeble efforts should meet with little or no success ? This, instead of throwing us into despondency, should serve to rouse us to more zealous and vigorous exertions, in such a difficult and important undertaking.

WHAT if our pecuniary resources are few, and unprotected by legal authority ? There is no ground of discouragement on this account, provided we are only faithful and successful in the discharge of our duty. It is only for God to bestow his grace upon *our* churches, as he did upon the churches of Macedonia, and *our* churches will to their power, yea, beyond their power, abound in the riches of their liberality, and even prayers to receive their gifts, and take upon us the care of ministering to the relief of those, who are famishing for the bread of life.

WHAT if the missionary field be wide ? This presents an animating motive, rather than a discouraging obstacle. The prospect of the salvation of millions should awaken our desires and endeavors, to civilize those who are not civilized, and gospelize those who are not gospelized, through this widely extended continent. The United States are abundantly able, in respect to numbers and wealth, to spread the gospel through all North and South America. And we were,

there is reason to believe, raised up and formed into a civil and religious community, to perform this service for God, in grateful return for his distinguishing and protecting mercy.

BUT where, some may ask, shall we find men of a truly missionary spirit, who will freely sacrifice their ease, their interest, their health, and even their lives, to carry the gospel to the poor in our new settlements, and to the savages in the wilderness? This, we acknowledge, is the greatest apparent difficulty to be expected and to be surmounted, in the business before us. But this we may safely refer to God. It is his to provide instruments to do his own work. But if the harvest be plenteous, and the laborers few, it is ours to pray the LORD of the harvest, to send forth laborers into his harvest. And may we not cheerfully confide in him, who hath formed so many missionary societies in New-York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, to raise up a sufficient number of pious, zealous, bold missionaries, to carry their pious and important design into effect?

BUT let us turn from the dark to the bright side of the work, in which we have publicly engaged. What if the set time to favor Zion should be at hand? What if there should be a general effusion of the divine spirit upon all our religious societies? What if the attention

of both ministers and people every where, should be awakened to the object we are pursuing, and they should, like the men of Israel, fall in to our assistance in abundance ? What if the numerous inhabitants in the new settlements should generally be formed into large and flourishing churches ? What if the poor heathens should have an opportunity and a heart to embrace the gospel ? In a word, what if this whole continent should be both civilized and gospelized, through the instrumentality of this and other missionary societies ? Who would not have reason to rejoice ? And who would have more reason to rejoice, than those, who were the most sincere, active, bold, and zealous in bringing about such happy events ? These are not imaginary prospects. If God intends to make us a *happy*, he will make us a *holy* people ; and if he intends to make us a *holy* people, he will employ the proper means to effect his purpose. Let us, then, my brethren, take courage ; let our hearts and hands be strong ; for there are certainly prospects within our view, which, whether realized, either before, or after we are laid in the dust, will abundantly reward us, for all that we can do, to build up the kingdom of our DIVINE REDEEMER.

A BRIEF ABSTRACT
OF THE
PROCEEDINGS AND FUND
OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

AN impression of the importance of the knowledge of the gospel of Christ to the present interests, and especially to the future salvation, of men, and a solicitude for those portions of the human race which are either partially or totally destitute of this knowledge, originated THE MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY. It was instituted in 1799 ; and, at its first meeting, May 28, in that year, it consisted of *thirty-eight* members. Its constitution was, soon after, published, with an address to all christians desirous of the propagation of the gospel, soliciting their serious attention to the object contemplated by the society. This object is declared, in the constitution, to be, " to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel among the heathens, as well as other people in the remote parts of our country, where CHRIST is seldom or never preached." A small fund was raised by the contribution of the members of the society and of others ; and several ministers were chosen to form a mission to the frontiers of the United States. Obstacles prevented the elected missionaries from engaging in the service.

The success of the institution, however, so far as it relates to the accession of members, and an accumulation of the fund, has been fully equal to the expectations of the society. At the annual meeting, on the 27th of last May, it appeared, that the whole number of members was *one hundred and nineteen* ; and the fund amounts to upwards of a thousand dollars, and is increasing both from the annual contributions of its members, and the liberal donations of the pious and liberal.

ENCOURAGED by its augmented resources, the society, at their last meeting, voted to employ four missionaries, the ensuing summer, to commence a serious execution of its design. Four ordained ministers were, accordingly, elected for the mission. Two of whom, by direction of the trustees, are destined for the Province of Maine, and two for the western frontiers.

OUGHT not the smiles of the Great Head of the church on the first efforts of the society to be religiously and gratefully acknowledged as *a token for good* ? Ought they not to stimulate christians to afford the institution the concurrent aids of their pecuniary contribution, of their personal influence, of their prayers, and of their zealous exertions ? But we are anticipating what does not properly belong to this statement of facts. The motives for giving the society a

prompt and pious patronage are fully exhibited in the subjoined Address. May the perusal of it excite in the bosoms of its readers that spirit of christian philanthropy and charity, which will insure their co-operation in promoting the benevolent purposes of the society, and cause *the blessing of many that are ready to perish to come upon them!*

JUNE 24, 1800.

OFFICERS.

THE officers of the society, for the ensuing year, are :

Rev. NATHANIEL EMMONS, D. D. PRESIDENT.

Rev. SAMUEL AUSTIN, SECRETARY.

Deacon JOHN SIMPKINS, TREASURER,

Rev. Mess'rs. DAVID SANFORD,

DANIEL HOPKINS,

EZRA WELD,

SAMUEL SPRING,

SAMUEL NILES,

JOSEPH BARKER,

SAMUEL AUSTIN,

ABIEL HOLMES,

JONATHAN STRONG,

} TRUSTEES.

AN
ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.

MEN, BRETHREN, AND FATHERS,

THE charitable object of the MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY is the only apology for this friendly address. For, to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel among the heathen and other people almost destitute of it, manifestly corresponds with the command of CHRIST, and the benevolence of his disciples.

ALAS, how dark the moral state of the world from Adam to the Savior ! How dark also the period from the christian era to the present time ! For though it is computed that the earth contains *eight hundred millions* of human inhabitants, we find but fifty millions on the protestant list, and nearly five hundred millions on the list of benighted Pagans. Jews, Mahometans, and others, whose religious theory is diverse from the gospel, comprise the rest. The flock of CHRIST has always been small : and Zion still mourns because but few celebrate her solemn feasts.

BUT, let us pause a moment. How long shall this dark period of the church continue? Shall the adversary control the human race till the final consummation? Is this the decree of the ALMIGHTY? We do not thus read the scriptures. We rather believe Satan will shortly lose his malignant influence, and that all nations will embrace the LORD JESUS. Remembering then, that Zion's God directs all the revolutions of kingdoms and empires; that the hearts of all men are in his hand, we cannot but thankfully notice the christian charity and zeal which have lately originated and endowed so many *Missionary Societies*, both in Europe and America, as a precious token for good. To the eye of faith there is, at this revolutionary period, at this birth-day of interesting events, a peculiar concurrence of divine operations to hasten the promised time when *the wilderness shall blossom as the rose, and the whole world be filled with the glory of salvation*. While, therefore, we expect the rapid wheels of providence will soon introduce the joyful days of Zion, shall not the followers of the lamb gird up their loins and double their diligence? If we wish to dispel the fatal ignorance which broods over the minds of millions of the wretched natives; if we wish to arm our infant settlements against the increasing powers of infidelity; in one word, if we supremely love the glory of God in the salvation of souls, let us harmonize with the spirit of gospel missions: For until the elect

shall be gathered, or CHRIST shall recal his servants from their labors, this command, "*Preach the gospel to every creature,*" will remain in full force. Instead of dreaming, like idle men, that there is a lion in the way, let us advance in the name of the LORD, and remove every difficulty, and surmount every obstacle. By personal exertions, merely, we can do nothing ; but by the gracious influence of the ALMIGHTY we can do all things : For the LORD effects the purposes of his grace, not by the wisdom and power of man, but by the energy of his holy Spirit. If we embrace CHRIST to conduct and support us, we have nothing to fear but our own declension: Opposition will fly before us, and mountains become plains. Let not the day of small things be despised.

LET preachers of the gospel who are best qualified for missionaries, accept the elevated office, and magnify it from end to end of our extensive and destitute territory. Let our brethren, both in the city and country, who possess property, possess also charitable hearts, and improve their riches by supporting faithful missions, till the wilderness shall bow before the king of Zion : For what qualified missionaries can quit their domestic and parochial connexions, and spend their time, and exhaust their strength, among the remote settlements without incurring heavy expense ? The laborer is worthy of his hire ; and

to support the most useful missions we must be furnished with answerable funds. But the earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof : and we willingly believe that he will open the hearts of rich men and speedily furnish pecuniary means to erect gospel churches beyond the Western mountains and lakes, where the perishing natives are offering sacrifices to devils. Prayer and pecuniary aid are both necessary to carry into effect the noble design of missionary societies : And is it possible for the work to fail while christians pray fervently for its success, and men of property love the souls of their fellow mortals ? How easy for a small number of men, who possess but a common share of property, to support several missionaries from year to year ? A thousand dollars only of gospel charity will furnish much bread for starving souls in the wilderness.

WHILE the society wisely improves donations, and generously rewards faithful missionaries, why shall not our fund increase like a river which is supplied by thousands of brooks and unremitting springs ? All good men love to do good and to communicate. For it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. Let the children of prosperity, therefore, take the advantage of their property, and devote a small share of it, at least, to ornament the temple of salvation. Let them give a portion to seven and also to eight. Money devoted to the missionary fund

is so much precious property previously lodged in the bank of heaven. CHRIST loves and will bountifully reward the cheerful giver. A single cent of gospel charity in CHRIST's estimation, is more valuable than mines of silver and gold in the contracted hands of selfishness. Shall we then be remiss while the salvation of thousands depends on missionary exertions? Shall we not commiserate the vast number of children who never saw the bible, nor any of CHRIST's ministers? Shall we be attentive to objects of the least importance, and neglect those of the greatest importance? Shall we be out-done by the men of the world? Shall the miser painfully penetrate the bowels of the earth in quest of glittering dust? Shall the merchant meet every danger of the elements both at home and abroad, to accumulate wealth? Shall the emulous sons of science waste the midnight lamp and even life itself to register their names among the literati? Shall Columbus and other navigators quit their native shores and explore the globe amidst all the inclemency of the seasons, and other indescribable dangers, to discover a new spot of land to perpetuate their names? Shall kingdoms and empires be depopulated, shall millions of the human race bleed and die to procure the victor's laurel? Shall the greatest efforts be made and the greatest sufferings be endured for nothing, and shall we neglect the salvation of immortal souls? Shall christians be surpassed in exertions by the chil-

dren of this world ? No. Let us then turn the tables and be influenced by the example of enterprising missionaries. Shall the unwearied Jesuits fly from west to east and east to west, thousands of leagues to proselyte the pagans ? Shall the benevolent and piously enterprising Moravians explore the northern regions, and bleed and freeze and die to warm and comfort the hearts of the poor heathen, with divine love and grace ? Shall *Elliot*, *Brainard* and others of congenial souls forever wear the sparkling crowns which they earned among the native tribes ? Shall British christians, at the present day, bear the glad tidings of grace to the other side of the world ? Shall all these and many more examples be presented to our view in vain ? In one word, Shall CHRIST die to give us an opportunity to promote the salvation of man, and shall we remain indolent and let them be lost forever ? GOD forbid. For how, alas, can we escape, if we neglect the means in our power of promoting the great salvation of others ? Let us then show ourselves men, and act according to truth. What would be the duty of the heathen were we in their condition and they in ours ? Suppose the change to be actually made ! suppose them now clothed with gospel advantages, and we destitute. Would it be their duty to bless us ? Shall we not then bless them ? For the golden rule is divine, and must be adopted in order to meet the solemn process of the great day with consolation.

Blessed are those who love the souls of others as they ought to love their own, for they will be approved by their Judge. But how shall others who neglect to furnish the destitute with gospel advantages, endure the criterion which CHRIST will finally adopt? For to neglect the salvation of souls, is to neglect and disregard the Savior. The faithful only will finally receive the crown of eternal life ; but how can men be faithful who knowingly neglect their advantages to spread the knowledge of salvation among the destitute ? “ Go out and compel them to come in that my house may be filled,” is the unalterable injunction of divine grace. With this the apostles uniformly complied, and were they to revisit the world, neither the heathen tribes, nor any other destitute people would be neglected. Every quarter of the globe, the most solitary places not excepted, would witness the pungent instructions of Paul, the burning zeal of Peter, and the divine eloquence of Apollos. Faithful men ! ample reward !

Now christian friends and fellow mortals, are these things interesting ? The representation we confess is manifestly inadequate to the object. The one half is not told ; but the path of duty is plain to those who are willing to embrace it. The field is wide, the work is great, and the encouragement is most excellent. If we seek the LORD we shall find him : If we devoutly

acknowledge him in our charitable attempt to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel, he will guide and support us.

WHILE then the members of the society will punctually and faithfully attend the business of the annual meeting according to the spirit of the constitution ; and while the trustees and missionaries, it is hoped, will act answerably to the reposed confidence, shall we not expect God's blessing ? Shall we not experience the charity and realize the liberal donations of Zion's friends who are not members of the society ? Fervent prayers and generous donations are particularly necessary to support the cause which we advocate. Will a gracious God own and bless the society, and make it extensively useful to the souls of men, and plentifully reward its benefactors, and fill the world with the glory of his great name.

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